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Two London trains crash, killing

LONDON (AP) — Two London commuter trains smashed into each other during rush hour yesterday, killing 26 passengers and injuring 160 on the same rail line as another fatal crash two years ago.

Ambulance and fire crews, police and rail workers swarmed around the overturned, mangled rail cars for hours, locating and freeing injured survivors in the smoldering wreckage near the Ladbroke Grove residential area in west London.

Many passengers sobbed as they described frantically crawling out broken windows after Britain's worst train accident in more than a decade.

"I was thinking, 'God, please don't let me die,'" Stuart Allen, a passenger, said. "You've got flames. You've got smoke. You've got a big bang. You've just got to think the worst."

Police said one badly damaged car could contain more bodies, but called off the search for more victims until daylight today.

The cause of the collision was not immediately known, but health and safety officials began an investigation.

Great Western, one of the train companies involved in Tuesday's disaster, had been fined \$2.47 million for "dereliction of duty" in connection with the crash in 1997 that killed seven people and injured 150 others.

"I felt an almighty bang," passenger David Taylor said of yesterday's crash, which occurred at 8:11 a.m.

"I looked up, and I could see the front of the coach was on fire. There were balls of flames coming down both sides."

Emergency crews said 18 people were seriously injured and 124 transported to area hospitals.

"Injuries are among the worst I have seen in my professional career," Robin Touquet, an accident and emergency consultant at St. Mary's Hospital said.

"I could see people with blood

Britain: Worst rail crash in more than 10 years

Two commuter trains collided at the height of rush hour Tuesday morning minutes away from Paddington Station.



pouring down their faces," Joe Bannerman, who was working nearby said.

"Someone was running with their clothes on fire. I could see lots of people were burned badly on their faces and hands. They were shouting 'Help! Help! Get us out!'"

Authorities could not immediately determine the total number of passengers aboard the trains.

Great Western said as many as

500 people might board its train, minutes from its destination of London Paddington Station.

Thames Trains carried 150 passengers on its train.

While safety officials are cautious about speculation about the cause of the collision, it was possible that the crash would study the 1997 accident in its search for answers.

Radioactive water leaked inside power plant

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Radioactive water leaked inside a South Korean nuclear power plant during repair work, exposing 22 workers to small amounts of radiation, the government said yesterday.

About 12 gallons of so-called "heavy water" was leaked during the accident Monday evening at a nuclear plant in Wolsung, 190 miles southeast of the capital Seoul, the Science and Technology Ministry said in a statement.

It said the radioactive water was contained inside the plant and did not escape into the environment.

The mishap followed neighboring Japan's worst nuclear accident last week, in which at least 49 people were exposed to radiation.

The town of Tokaimura was temporarily closed down amid heightened fears about the safety of Japan's nuclear plants.

Those exposed to radiation in the Wolsung accident were employees of the state Korea Electric Power Corp., which runs three nuclear reactors in Wolsung. The Canadian-designed reactors use heavy water to generate electricity.

Heavy water behaves like ordinary water, but it contains a heavier version of hydrogen.

It is not naturally radioactive, but as it circulates in pipes it can pick up traces of radioactive metals.

So when workers handle the water, they routinely treat it as radioactive.

The leak occurred during repair work on a cooling water pump at Wolsung-3, which has a capacity of 700 megawatts and started commercial operations on July 1, 1998. It was the first scheduled maintenance work on that reactor since it opened.

Two workers were checking pipe connections at the time of the leak and 20 others were dispatched to clean the area and were exposed to radioactive gas emanating from the water, Chung Kisang, chief nuclear technician at Korea Electric said.

"The amount of radiation that affected the workers is negligible," Chung said. "It is not harmful to the workers."

He said the workers were exposed to radiation equivalent to four X-rays, but were not injured and were sent home.

A. David Rossin, former U.S. assistant secretary of energy for nuclear energy, said yesterday that based on early reports of the Korean acci-

dent, "chances are the exposures were low and the radioactivity is low."

An investigation was underway. In 1984, 23.5 tons of heavy water leaked from Wolsung-1.



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